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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3407
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5625
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3344
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3208
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001123

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE BUHLER
DOJ/ICITAP FOR MOGLE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: CHEMICALS SHIPMENT SNAFU
RESOLVED

REF: Ashgabat 392

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: A shipment of chemicals that arrived in February under the auspices of Post's INL-funded DOJ/ICITAP project with the Ministry of Interior (MVD) has finally reached its destination at the Interior Ministry's Criminal Research Center (CRC). After seven months of bureaucratic back and forth with the State Customs Service, the CRC was able take the delivery of USG-donated methanol and chloroform. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) Forty-five kilograms of methanol and chloroform were shipped via diplomatic sea cargo to Turkmenbashi last February under the auspices of Post's INL-funded DOJ/ICITAP project to assist the Interior Ministry's forensic lab (referred as CRC). (NOTE: DOJ/ICITAP has been actively working with the CRC since 2001. The USG previously donated several essential pieces of lab equipment, including a gas chromatograph. END NOTE). During the past six months, Post sent five diplomatic notes requesting customs clearance for the chemicals, but received no response. Follow-up phone calls every week, as well as the meetings with MFA and MVD officials, brought no progress in clearing the chemicals, which sat for six months at the Turkmenbashi Customs clearing point. Turkmen Customs authorities had denied clearance on the grounds that the importation of methanol requires specific Presidential approval. The MFA applied to the Presidential Apparatus (PA) in June, but that also produced no resolution of the issue.

14. (SBU) Last week, the Embassy revised its approach

in a diplomatic note to the MFA, stating that the chemicals had already been donated to the CRC, and that the CRC had further responsibility for clearing them through Customs and their transportation from Turkmenbashi to Ashgabat. The note essentially transferred responsibility for the chemicals from the Embassy to the CRC, which in turn facilitated quick clearance from the Presidential Apparatus. The head of the CRC's Chemistry Department, who was given responsibility for transporting the chemicals, said that he was given a letter signed by Gurban Torayev, Head of the Presidential Apparatus' Department of Analysis of Law Enforcement Activities. The letter contained a Presidential decree allowing the chemicals to be cleared. CRC Forensic Lab personnel called the Embassy to express their gratitude for the chemicals, which they said were "badly needed" for their operations. "There is no way for us to purchase this stuff (chemicals) locally or overseas on our own. We don't care if they're seven months late. If stored properly, these solvents have no expiration dates, and will be useable for a long time. We're just glad to be getting them at last." chemists said.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the Turkmen government had been told from the beginning that the chemical solvents were destined for the CRC, the fact that the shipment technically belonged to the Embassy had prevented their clearance. Neither the Customs Service nor the Presidential Apparatus was willing to take such responsibility. For the Turkmen, to officially refuse customs clearance was also

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problematic given accepted norms of diplomatic cargo destruction procedures. Ultimately, it was only Post's creative alternative that got the shipment cleared. END COMMENT.

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